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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 005422

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OPRC KMDR FR

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - IRAN - NUCLEAR ISSUE
IRAQ MIDDLE EAST - ISRAELI PULLOUT FROM GAZA AND HAMAS
PARIS - TUESDAY, AUGUST 09, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

IRAN - NUCLEAR ISSUE

IRAQ

MIDDLE EAST - ISRAELI PULLOUT FROM GAZA AND HAMAS

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO LEADS WITH IRAN AND ITS DECISION TO RESUME ITS URANIUM ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES: "IRAN CHOOSES CONFRONTATION." FOR ITS EDITORIALIST PIERRE ROUSSELIN TEHERAN'S CHOICE IS AN "OPEN CHALLENGE" TO THE WEST, WHILE FRANCE'S FM DOUSTE-BLAZY CONSIDERS THAT IRAN HAS OPENED THE DOOR TO "A SERIOUS CRISIS." HE CALLS UPON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO REMAIN "UNITED" IN DEALING WITH THE SITUATION. IN HER REPORT FROM WASHINGTON, LE FIGARO CORRESPONDENT GUILLEMETTE FAURE EXPLAINS THAT THE U.S. "IS NOT OVERREACTING TO IRAN'S POSITION BECAUSE IT DID NOT EXPECT MUCH FROM THE NEGOTIATIONS UNDERTAKEN BY THE EUROPEAN TROIKA." (SEE PART C)

POPULAR RIGHT-OF-CENTER FRANCE SOIR REPORTS ON THE POSSIBILITY FOR SOME GIS TO RETURN FROM IRAQ BY EARLY 2006, AND CARRIES A SCATHING COMMENTARY TITLED: "DOES THE WORLD'S NUMBER ONE ARMY DESERVE ITS NAME?" (SEE PART C)

REPORTS ABOUT BENJAMIN NETANYAHU'S RESIGNATION FROM THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT CONTINUE, WITH COMMENTATORS AGREEING THAT IT CHANGES NOTHING FOR SHARON'S PLANS TO PULLOUT FROM GAZA. AN OP-ED IN LE FIGARO BY OLIVIER ROY, AN EXPERT ON THE MUSLIM WORLD, IS TITLED "CAN HAMAS CHANGE?" (SEE PART C)

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

IRAN - NUCLEAR ISSUE

"IRAN'S CHALLENGE"

PIERRE ROUSSELIN IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (08/09): "IRAN HAS CHOSEN CONFRONTATION WITH THE WEST. EVEN IF WE ARE ACCUSTOMED TO TEHRAN'S DRAMATIZATION, EVEN IF THE EUROPEANS CONTINUE TO SEARCH FOR AN OUT IN ORDER TO HIDE THEIR FAILURE, THE RESUMPTION OF URANIUM ENRICHMENT BY IRAN MARKS A POINT OF NO RETURN AND SIGNALS THE BEGINNING OF AN INTERNATIONAL CRISIS. IRAN FOOLS NO ONE WHEN IT PRETENDS THAT ITS AIM IS ONLY TO PRODUCE ELECTRICITY. CONSIDERING IRAN'S INTRANSIGENCE THERE IS NO POINT IN DILLY-DALLYING: THE ONLY SOLUTION IS TO GO BEFORE THE UNSC IN ORDER TO ADOPT SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAN, AS THE U.S. HAS BEEN PROPOSING FOR SOME TIME. THE COUNTDOWN HAS STARTED. THE TONE USED BY TEHRAN IN ANSWER TO THE EUROPEANS' PROPOSALS PROVES TO WHAT EXTENT IRAN FEELS IN A POSITION OF STRENGTH. THE U.S. IS MUCH TOO BUSY WITH IRAQ TO CONSIDER MILITARY STRIKES AGAINST IRAN. IN ISRAEL, THE ATTENTION IS FOCUSED ON THE PULLOUT FROM GAZA. GREAT BRITAIN HAS ITS HANDS FULL WITH ITS HUNT FOR TERRORISTS. AS FOR ECONOMIC SANCTIONS, THE PRICE OF OIL PROTECTS IRAN FROM AN EMBARGO THAT WOULD PENALIZE THE WEST, WHOSE ONLY OPTION IS TO REMAIN UNITED AND DETERMINED."

"WASHINGTON BETTING ON THE UNSC"

GUILLEMETTE FAURE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (08/09): "THE U.S. IS HANDLING THE IRANIAN ISSUE WITH DISCRETION. IT IS CONVINCED THAT THE ONLY SOLUTION LIES WITH THE UNSC. IRAN'S 'NO' TO THE EUROPEANS HAS NOT HAD THE SAME DRAMATIC IMPACT IN THE U.S. AS IT HAS IN EUROPE. WASHINGTON WAS NOT OPENLY COMMITTED TO THE LATEST CRISIS. IF THE IRANIAN POSITION HAS ELICITED SUCH LITTLE REACTION FROM THE U.S. IT IS BECAUSE WASHINGTON DID NOT EXCEPT MUCH FROM THE NEGOTIATIONS. THE NEW U.S. AMBASSADOR TO THE UN, JOHN BOLTON, HAS BEEN WORKING ON THE IRANIAN ISSUE FOR YEARS AND CANNOT WAIT TO GET HIS HANDS ON IT. THE UN COULD WELL BE THE KEY TO RESOLVING THE CRISIS. EVEN IF MANY QUESTIONS REMAIN ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE AMERICANS AND THE EUROPEANS ONCE THE QUESTION OF SANCTIONS IS BROACHED."

IRAQ

"DOES THE WORLD'S NUMBER ONE ARMY DESERVE ITS NAME?"

RIGHT-OF-CENTER FRANCE SOIR (08/09): "FACED WITH THE QUAGMIRE

THAT IRAQ HAS TURNED INTO, THE U.S. ARMY HAS BEEN LACKING AND SHOWN ITS LIMITATIONS, ESPECIALLY IN TERMS OF NUMBERS. THE THREE MAIN PRIORITIES IT SET AT THE START OF THE CONFLICT, ENDING SADDAM'S REGIME, MAINTAINING ORDER AND RECONSTRUCTING IRAQ'S INFRASTRUCTURE, REQUIRED, ACCORDING TO EXPERTS, CLOSE TO 460,000 MEN. BUT ONLY 138,000 MEN ARE PRESENT IN IRAQ. THE U.S. ARMY IS SUFFERING FROM A CRUEL LACK OF PERSONNEL. ONE CAN LEGITIMATELY QUESTION THE ABILITY OF THE YOUNG RECRUITS WHO ARE ABOUT TWENTY YEARS IN AGE AND WHO FOR THE MOST PART SPEAK ONLY SPANISH, TO HELP MAINTAIN THE PEACE IN IRAQ. HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT THE WORLD'S NUMBER ONE ARMY MISESTIMATED THE TASK TO THIS EXTENT? . THE CREDIBILITY AND SERIOUSNESS OF THE U.S. ARMY HAVE BEEN TARNISHED EVEN IF THIS DOES NOT SEEM TO BE A MATTER OF CONCERN FOR THE WHITE HOUSE."

MIDDLE EAST - ISRAELI PULLOUT FROM GAZA AND HAMAS

"CAM HAMAS CHANGE?"

OLIVIER ROY IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (08/09): "AFTER THE ISRAELI PULLOUT FROM GAZA, HAMAS WILL HAVE CONTROL OF THE AREA. THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY WILL NOT BE ABLE TO IMPOSE ITSELF. THIS NEW SITUATION WILL FORCE HAMAS TO MAKE A CHOICE BETWEEN A STRATEGY THAT HAS BEEN DEFINED BY THE STRUGGLE TO LIBERATE PALESTINE AND A POLICY FOR MANAGING THE REGION. THE CULTURE OF COMBAT WHICH HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN THAT OF HAMAS WILL NOT DISAPPEAR IN A DAY. THE ROLE THAT ISLAM WILL PLAY IN THE ATTITUDE ADOPTED BY HAMAS REMAINS AN OPEN QUESTION. UNTIL NOW, ISLAM HAS PLAYED THE ROLE OF A MOBILIZING FORCE WITHIN HAMAS IN ITS WAR FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION. IN THE LONG RUN IT WOULD BE LOGICAL FOR HAMAS TO TURN FROM A CULTURE OF WAR TO A CULTURE OF POLITICAL POWER. IN THE SHORT TERM IT WILL TRY TO NAVIGATE BETWEEN THE TWO." HOFMANN